



NOAA's National Ocean Service

ROUNDTABLES

SUMMARY: LIVING *on the* EDGE

On Wednesday, March 10, 2004, National Ocean Service (NOS) Assistant Administrator Dr. Richard W. Spinrad hosted the fourth NOS Constituent Roundtable, "Living on the Edge," at the Hotel Washington in Washington, DC. The roundtable was held in conjunction with the 29th annual Ocean and Coastal Program Managers Meeting, so many of the constituents were managers of state or territory coastal programs or estuarine research reserves. Eighteen constituents joined Dr. Spinrad, in addition to eight representatives of NOS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Ocean Council. Following is a summary of the major points discussed at the roundtable.

Opening Remarks

Introduction of the Linking Science and Coastal Management Survey: Following introductions by participants, Debra Hernandez, Chair of the Coastal States Organization, provided a brief overview of the Linking Science and Coastal Management survey conducted by the Coastal States Organization and sponsored by the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology. She explained that the survey is part of a larger conversation about translating science to management. Over 220 respondents from the Coastal States Organization, the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association, the Association of State Water Pollution Control Administrators, the Association of State Floodplain Managers, fisheries commissions, and other organizations responded to the survey. Members identified land use and habitat change as their two highest priority management issues. The survey also identified cumulative impact identification and assessment; land-use change analysis and trends analysis; and affordable, high-resolution remote sensing as the most useful tools to help coastal managers address these issues.

Dr. Spinrad then opened the discussion by asking how we might take advantage of the survey in responding to the upcoming report from the U.S. Ocean Commission on Ocean Policy. Attendees responded that the survey would provide the framework to suggest which opportunities to pursue. They also noted that the survey held few surprises.

Constituent Observations

Urbanization and Land Use

Several participants were pleased that the survey emphasized the growing importance of urbanization and land-use issues to their coastal programs and to the nation as a whole. Participants expressed interest in new technology to accommodate growth while reducing environmental impacts. One participant felt that NOS is at the forefront of land management, and that addressing land use and urbanization is a unique opportunity for NOS to be a national leader. Another participant expressed concern that it will be difficult to measure our success in this area, because success is often defined by preventing inappropriate development from occurring.

Social Science

Several participants expressed the need for more social science research. They felt that this kind of information could be useful in management situations where local residents oppose coastal management because they fear infringement on their property rights. Dr. Spinrad suggested that in these situations, "gaming" (simulation



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exercises) might be appropriate to help citizens better understand the effects of management decisions. One participant shared a potential model of successful simulation, in which Florida State University, using Sea Grant funding, developed a “game” to help local government officials work through the decisions necessary to rebuild a community after a hurricane.

Marketing

Participants expressed concern that coastal audiences can be difficult to reach. To overcome the mentality of “build it and they will come,” some participants recommended more market research. Some also suggested integrating “Madison Avenue marketing tools” in an effort to involve the public.

Training and Product Delivery

Participants felt that NOS should focus on capabilities brought to bear on concrete problems, a continued commitment to training, and strategies for improved product and service delivery. The need for products and services integrating different types of information to aid decision-making (e.g., functional mapping products) was also noted. Participants also expressed appreciation for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System’s Coastal Training Program.

Coastal Technology

Several participants mentioned that inexpensive near-shore bathymetry would be most helpful for their coastal and estuarine programs. Other participants mentioned the need for products that synthesize data and provide predictive tools and products, because program staff is often too busy to absorb and analyze real-time data. Participants also expressed concern about scalability. They felt that NOAA products and information are sometimes produced at resolutions that are too low to be useful on a local scale. They recommended that NOAA seek opportunities to interact with end users at the product design stage to ensure that NOAA products are useful for decision-makers at the state and local levels.

Regionalization

Participants from across the nation expressed the desire for a greater NOAA presence in their regions. They felt this would be useful both because it would enable NOAA to respond to predicted Ocean Commission recommendations about regionalization and because it would help involve NOAA in day-to-day management activities on the local level. Participants also emphasized that NOAA should not see its role as solely to provide services to local organizations, but to view locals as partners in coastal management efforts.

Coastal and Ocean Observations

Participants expressed the need to include end-user audiences in discussions about ocean and coastal observing systems. They also noted the need to consider how observations will feed into needed products, such as trends analyses.

Closing Comments Most participants expressed a need for a sustained dialogue between scientists and coastal managers. Dr. Spinrad concluded that he will continue to seek venues to maintain a dialogue between NOS and a broad group of stakeholders.